

# FE(L)TP Development Process

## Introduction

Field Epidemiology and Training Programs (FETPs) and Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Program (FELTPs) are applied epidemiology and public health laboratory practice programs designed to strengthen the public health capacity within the Ministries of Health (MOH). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC's Division of Global Public Health Capacity Development (DGPHCD) staff provide technical assistance and support to countries to implement strategies to improve their public health workforce, systems, and institutions. The programs are tailored to each country's national priorities, public health needs, and existing public health infrastructure to strengthen their public health surveillance and response systems for priority diseases.

The success of these programs depends in large part on the level of MOH commitment and ownership, and buy-in from the other stakeholders. The MOH should be involved in every step of the development and implementation process.

The FE(L)TP development process is crucial to the overall success and sustainability of the program. The process varies somewhat for each country depending on the unique circumstances in that country, but certain key elements are common. The process usually takes 1-2 years, and the order of the steps may vary. The various steps that may be involved in the development process are described below. In addition, more in-depth information about the process can be found in the *Field Epidemiology and Training Programs Development Handbook*, available at [www.cdc.gov/cogh/dgphcd/pdf/FETPTrainingManual.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/cogh/dgphcd/pdf/FETPTrainingManual.pdf).

## Pre-assessment visit

In the beginning, it is often necessary to conduct an initial visit to the country to create awareness and understanding of the program. This visit often contains preliminary discussions with different stakeholders to discuss general needs within the public health system, obtain commitment from different stakeholders to establish the program and identify financial support. One of the results of the meeting often is a letter requesting CDC assistance from the MOH, issued by the Minister, Federal Secretary, or other senior official. This visit should take place prior to a stakeholders' workshop and assessment visits in order to provide the initial steps and relationships required for the establishment of the program.

## Stakeholders' workshop (program development workshop)

A successful FE(L)TP is built upon relationships, and each step in the development process is meant to build upon and solidify these relationships. Buy-in must occur from the MOH and other stakeholders. A stakeholders' workshop brings all FE(L)TP stakeholders together. Participants include the MOH at the national and sub-national levels, other government and non-governmental partners, and potential donors. A national university or other body of certification may be brought in to ensure sustainability and upward career mobilization within the track set by the MOH.

The workshop introduces the FE(L)TP and allows participants to develop a shared vision. Each group has the opportunity to present both strengths and challenges they face in improving the nation's public health. Decisions regarding the ideal candidate, general topics to be included in the curriculum, potential sites for field placement, and the name of the degree awarded are made by this group. This meeting ensures that stakeholders have the opportunity to discuss issues and be a part of the decision-making process.

## Assessment visits

Following the stakeholder's workshop, a small team of CDC, MOH, and other primary stakeholders will make site visits to sub-national MOH offices, public health laboratories, and universities to assess the situation on the ground. The team has the opportunity to talk to staff regarding systems and needs. A baseline is established and goals are further developed. These visits serve to shape the program to better meet the country's public health training needs. In addition, these visits also help to determine whether the supervision and structure in place

on the ground that will support the participants when conducting their fieldwork. This may entail access to surveillance and other data, opportunities for outbreak and other public health investigations, and support from other areas of public health such as the laboratory.

### Country plan

The results of the stakeholders' workshop and the assessment visits are compiled in a country plan. This document identifies and defines, among other things, the needs of the country, implementing partners, FE(L)TP staff members, the target participants for the FE(L)TP, and potential field sites. The plan guides the development and implementation process of the FE(L)TP by defining the goals and objectives for the program. The country plan also includes a proposed budget for the program.

### Steering committee

Representatives of stakeholder organizations form a steering committee, which meets two to four times a year to ensure that development and implementation of the FE(L)TP remains on track, both in the sense of time and intention. The optimal number of persons for the committee will vary, but a small committee is preferable. Some FE(L)TPs have both permanent and rotating membership. For example, there may always be a member representing the MOH but a member representing the public health community may rotate among various other agencies.

### Curriculum development workshop

The curriculum development workshop is another crucial piece of FE(L)TP development. The MOH and universities come together with CDC to set the curriculum for the two-year FE(L)TP. Among the topics developed are core competencies (for more information about core competencies, see the *Field Epidemiology Training Program Standard Core Curriculum*, available online at [www.cdc.gov/cogh/dgphcd/training/pdf/FETPStandardCoreCurriculum.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/cogh/dgphcd/training/pdf/FETPStandardCoreCurriculum.pdf)), learning objectives, course schedule, location of courses, candidates, grading schemes, and application process. The result of the workshop is typically a proposal that is submitted to the university for either an amendment to an existing degree or a new degree.

### Field Placements

Because the majority of the participants' time will be spent providing service to the MOH in the field, it is essential to identify potential field placement sites in advance of the selection of participants. One model is to place participants in areas other than their place of origin to provide them with a new experience that exposes them to different systems and public health situations. The structure of field placements varies depending upon the situation in-country, but it is often beneficial for the participants to have some longevity in the field placement to allow them to develop all of their key competencies.

### Short courses

A delay often occurs between the assessment visits and the first FE(L)TP class. To maintain momentum and begin building capacity, short courses may be conducted. For example, in a short course on outbreak investigation and response, teams of epidemiologists and public health laboratorians are trained to work together to investigate and respond to outbreaks and communicate results to the appropriate parties. Teams conduct an applied learning project in the months following the course and return to present projects related to improves outbreak investigation and response.

The course is a short-term response to needs and allows implementing partners the opportunity to further assess the capacity of prospective FE(L)TP candidates. Short courses help start building capacity early in the program development process and provide technical knowledge for potential supervisors to serve as mentors for the participants while they are in the field.

### Next steps

More information about FE(L)TPs as well as contact information is available on the DGPHCD website at [www.cdc.gov/cogh/dgphcd](http://www.cdc.gov/cogh/dgphcd).

## **Example of FE(L)TP Eight Development Steps Before Enrollment of the First Cohort of the Two-Year FE(L)TP**

### **1. Pre-assessment visit**

- Make initial contact with MOH officials where the program will be located, and other sponsors, such as the local CDC office staff, other ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education, and local universities.
- Discuss how an FE(L)TP may be able to fill identified needs
- Discuss timeline for implementation and potential funding opportunities
- Meet with other implementing partners, i.e., donors, university partners
- Establish commitment from the MOH, and other key areas to move forward with the FE(L)TP

### **2. Stakeholders' workshop (or program development workshop)**

- Include all key stakeholders, such as national MOH, sub-national MOH units (epidemiology and laboratory), university, other government partners, WHO, and non-governmental organizations.
- Includes potential donors
- Introduce the FE(L)TP to the stakeholders using previous examples
- Discuss critical outcomes for FE(L)TPs
- Formulate a shared vision
- Discuss needs and
- Identify characteristics for success for the host country and trainees etc

### **3. Assessment visits**

- Conduct an assessment of the epidemiology, surveillance (and potentially the laboratory and veterinary sectors of the government)
- Identify needs/gaps and how to fill them
- Gain a clearer picture of the situation on the ground
- Gain further buy-in from partners/clients
- Obtain initial ideas on design of the field component of the program

### **4. Country plan development**

- Outline needs
- Define goals and objectives of FE(L)TP
- Identify implementing partners
- Identify staffing needs
- Define potential field sites for training opportunities
- Develop work plan to guide development and implantation of the FE(L)TP
- Develop budget and identifies potential sources of funding

### **5. Formation of the steering committee**

- Develops shared vision of stakeholders
- Ensures that development and implementation remains on schedule
- Raises funds and advocates for the program

### **6. Curriculum development**

- Work with partners to adapt the FE(L)TP curriculum to the country context
- Determine competencies, learning objectives, course schedule, methods of assessment, and any other university requirements etc.

## **7. Identification of field placements**

- Determine field placement strategy
- Select field sites
- Match trainees to field placement sites
- Orient field supervisors
- Evaluate field sites

## **8. Short course**

- Conduct a survey of the target audience and key technical stakeholders on the ground to determine the level and focus of the course
- Use principles of FE(L)TP to train teams in areas such as outbreak investigation and response
- Include topics which are of particular importance to the country, such as specific diseases
- Take small steps towards goals while the FE(L)TP is in development
- Consider including epidemiologists, responders and public health laboratorians, etc.
- Use a combination of class work and an applied learning project